**William Godwin, the Philosophical Anarchist**

Born on the 3rd of March 1756 in Wisbeach, Cambridgeshire, William Godwin may have been the greatest visionary of the 18th century. Why is this so? Well because he was a philosopher of many influential ideas, an author of an impeccable collection of books, and most of all a visionary who had the perfection of society in his mind. But that’s just a taste of it.

William Godwin was the 7th of 13 children of Anne and John Godwin. John Godwin, as a dissenting minister, Godwin’s father was involved in many conflicts, causing him to move around a lot. From Wisbeach he would move to Debenham, Suffolk, and Guestwick in 1760, where he would settle down for a bit. In this small village, he was taught by Mrs. Edge, an elderly lady who focused mostly on religion, but not until 1764 did he go to Mr. Akers’ school in Hilderston due to the death of Mrs. Edge.

3 years went by until he decided on following the path of a minister by boarding up with a Mr. Samuel Newton, a minister himself. Mr. Samuel Newton taught Godwin the teachings of Robert Sandeman, a hyper-**Calvinist** who believed in the practices of the Reformed Church, specifically the teachings of John Calvin.

Deemed fit in entering the **Dissenting** College at Homerton, he was discharged due to the suspicion of **Sandemanianist** influence. Considering the dissenting, or reforming, basis of the college, they would not like a Sandemanianist who believed in the primitive practices of the church.

He then disregarded it and fled to Hoxton Academy, where the biographer, Andrew Kippis, and the minister Andrew Rees influenced him. Noted for **Arminianist** and **Arianist** influence, he was untouched by the importance of the holy trinity and the importance of church in healing one of sins, and continued his Sandemaniast belief. In 1778 he set off to his practice of becoming a minister.

Not until 1780 in Stowmarket, Suffolk did he gain income for his profession. Yet here in Stowmarket he had a religious revolution in which he turned to the deist side of religion in which he gained from the readings of Holback, Helvetius, and Rousseau.

Undoubtedly there was a dispute between his new belief and that of the congregation, so he set off to London under the advice of a friend to begin his career in literature.

His first works included *The History of the Life of William Pit, Earl of Chatham*, and he later was contributing to the *English Review.* At the end of 1782, he returned to being a minister in which, in a period of 7 months, he wrote a volume of sermons, *Sketches of History*, but quickly went back to his career as an author. Throughout 1782 and 1784 he wrote, in addition to the *Life of Chatham* and his sermons, two political pamphlets, a work on education, and a spoof of critical reviews.

He wasn’t making a reasonable salary until his old teacher Andrew Kippis, got him a job as the author of the British and Foreign History section for the *New Annual Register*, as well as that he wrote for a *Political Herald*, a **Whig** journal, a journal that opposed tyranny and the beliefs of Andrew Jackson. In 1791 during the height of the debate on the French Revolution, Godwin commented on Edmund Burkes’ *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. This so called “comment” was later written in a two-volume work known as *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice.*

Finished in 1793, this enquiry became the basis of **Philosophical Anarchism**. Philosophical Anarchism grew to be a great success in his time, aiming at points such as that people should not revolutionize states for moral legitimacy with war, but rather with peace to aid it. Also with that is the basis, which includes the idea that you should not obey the state, for they don’t believe they should. This thought didn’t suggest that the state should not exist, but rather enhanced the idea that people are free, and are not obligated to do what people tell them to do, something that delivers people hope and a sense of freedom in their lives.

At one pound, this enquiry allowed him to publish the book without the stepping in of the government. This allowed him to gain great success in the field of literature because of the philosophical power, the profoundness, and its utopian goal. *Political Justice* claims that government, and other big monopolies, institutions, and so forth, are doing nothing but halting the progression of mankind. He insists that perfectibility is reached through the ideas of Anarchism. His goal was for people to perfect themselves, undoubtedly creating a **utopian** society in its wake, a community where everything is ideal, no deficiencies, nothing wrong.

Is that not what a true visionary should want? Isn’t that the never-ending goal in life? To let our children roam around, no fear of trouble, war, famine>? Well this was the idea of Godwin. Godwin later, in 1795, published a second version of *Political Justice*, this time modifying the **rationalist** and utopian statements in the scripture. This work included many ideas, including the ism just stated, which pertain to what a utopian society would consist of. Rationalism for example is any view that is appealing through reasoning and justification.

Another one includes **consequentialism**, which is the idea that a morally good conduct would provide a good outcome, as well as a morally bad conduct would bring a bad outcome. All of these ideas were part Godwin’s idea of what a utopian society should contain. These were ideas for a next generation.

Godwin would later create a countless amount of political journals, pamphlets, and kids stories, even mysteries such as *The Adventure of Caleb Williams.*

But Godwin was truly a visionary for his utilitarianist, utopian, and perfectionist ideas that proposed isms that would revolutionize the world. Any person would believe that a man who had the sake of society on his mind as well as heart, who risked a life time of critics, just to perfect society, or at least leave the foundations of it for future generations to complete it, is the best visionary they can think of.

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